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Keynote

On the need for action oriented studies to promote organizational sustainability

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1. Introduction

The planning of production and the resulting design of work determine working conditions. Often this causal relation does not play an important role for the designers of production system and of work systems.

2. Aim

As the conference is dominated by researcher, the aim of this presentation is to discuss the demands to research having the ambition of conducting action oriented research contributing to a truly preventive effort.

3. Material and Methods

The presentation builds on experiences gathered and subsequent reflections in many case studies dealing with the joint optimization of productivity and working conditions.

4. Results

An efficient preventive effort must take into consideration that designers are situated in a complex setting with many conflicting demands to the design process. To handle these conflicting demands, the designers typically follow the demands formulated by the interest group identified as the most powerful often the financiers of the design process.

This has consequences both for practitioners but also for researchers included in action-oriented preventive research. This covers a complex and - for many researchers working with a health paradigm unfamiliar set of competences including understanding of designers decision making processes - and the drivers behind this process, the ability to argue alternative proposals within the conceptual models characterizing the designers. Behind the specific competence is the ability to see options for involving in the design process and to be able to contribute to the problem solving process of the designers. This can be labeled competencies to involve in the local political battles concerning the design of workplaces and of work processes.

5. Conclusions

Presently we are in a learning situation. How do we as researchers contribute to action oriented research focusing on promoting prevention of health and safety risks. This expands the research activities from documentation to studies of how to influence decision making processes of designers with a combination of a documentation of the long and short term effects of the actions initiated.